

Garry Wills

Magic Ford Touch May Undo the CIA

Senator Frank Church says either. Mr. Richardson lent he's afraid that the choice of a his appearance of New Eng- partisan like George Bush to land rectitude to Mr. Nixon in head the CIA will undermine every way he possibly could, the professional spirit of that before saving his own skin at agency. Odd, isn't it? Mr. the last minute.

Church (D., Idaho) has been But what about George pretending to fight that spirit Bush? His brief service as na- in his intelligence hearings tional chairman during Wat- and now he wants to restore ergate involved nothing near- it. That tends to confirm the ly as compromising as Mr. Ri- general opinion in Washington chardson's aborted efforts to that, between the two intelli- help Mr. Nixon.

gence hearings going on, Sena- A far more revealing epi- tor Church's committee has sode was Mr. Bush's service as United Nations ambassa- the staff but not the will and dor during the time of Mr. the committee of Representa- Nixon's opening to China.

tative Otis G. Pike (D., N.Y.) has the will but not the staff.

Mr. Church went on to say on solid ground than in that he had no objection to a charging that Mr. Nixon be- good Republican in the CIA trayed a thousand promises to post, just so long as he has not Taiwan, to Chiang Kai-shek been a national chairman for and to the old China lobby of his party—and he gave Elliot Mr. Nixon's earlier career. To L. Richardson's name as an deflate this charge Mr. Nixon example of such a good Re- sent Mr. Bush to vociferate publican. That's pretty odd, against Taiwan's expulsion too—Senator Church obvious- from the U.N. That expulsion ly agrees with Richard M. was a necessary consequence of Mr. Nixon's own action; but Nixon on the definition of a Mr. Bush pretended with good Republican.

Mr. Richardson came out of the Watergate scandal like great energy that nothing was a white knight. But those of us further from Mr. Nixon's mind than this outcome. who had seen him run errands Mr. Bush acted too well to for Mr. Nixon in Cabinet post keep his reputation among after Cabinet post wondered, sharp observers. He was not even then, whether his reputa- tion was earned. Mr. Nixon did not choose his attorney general lightly, in that period of turmoil. Now we can read, in the special prosecutor's fi- nal report, that Mr. Richard- son tried to hem in Archibald Cox, and only when Mr. Cox stood firm did Mr. Richardson realize he would have to fall honorably with Mr. Cox or he would fall farther down, and dishonorably, with Mr. Nixon himself.

That is not much of a re- commendation for the CIA post—or for any other post,

there to block the ouster or to help Chiang Kai-shek. He was sent on a diversionary errand to block some of the right wing's early criticism of de- tente.

The ploy worked as well as could be expected. When Mr. Bush, mission accomplished, was moved from the U.N. to the national committee, Wil- liam F. Buckley (the educated man's Howard Cosell), wrote: "It crossed the mind fleetingly that Bush was being pun- ished, rather belatedly in the last weeks of 1972, for having failed to achieve the desired result in the General Assem- bly in the fall of 1971 on the China debate."

Mr. Buckley rejected the fleeting thought, but on irrele- vant grounds; he never hints to his readers that Mr. Bush accomplished exactly the de- sired result—which was to blunt in some measure the protests of men like Mr. Buck- ley, who could swallow the Bush effort as a sincere one.

It is true that Mr. Bush has no claim to nonpartisan pro- fessionalism—and that is why I hope he gets confirmed as head of the CIA. The CIA's

ethos of gentlemen free-lan- cers needs to be undermined, and a shabby appointment will help along that effort.

Representative Michael J. Harrington told me, when we discussed the Church and Pike committees: "They cannot bring down the CIA. Those guys will have to bring them- selves down." Perhaps Presi- dent Ford, without knowing it, has begun that process with his nomination of Mr. Bush for director.